

[Centenary Heroes](#)[WEC Competition](#)[Volunteers](#)[Members](#)[Insights](#)[Women of Influence](#)[Books](#)[Events](#)

# Sue Murphy

HonFIEAust CPEng

Western Australia member Sue Murphy's long-spanning career has seen her occupy a diverse range of roles, as well as playing a key role in safeguarding WA's water availability for years to come.

Sue graduated as a Civil Engineer from the University of Western Australia in 1979. After winning a Clough Scholarship as an undergraduate, she joined Clough Engineering in 1980, commencing what would be a 25-year career in the organisation. Twelve years in the field as a site engineer and project manager led to corporate roles with a focus on human resources, safety, and engineering design management.

In 1998, Sue was appointed as the first woman on the board of Clough Engineering Ltd. In 2013, Sue was honoured with the prestigious "Sir John Holland Civil Engineer of the Year Award" by the Board of the College of Civil Engineers, and was presented with the IWA's "International Women in Water Award" the following year. Recently, she was named "WA Business Leader of the Year 2018/19" at the AIM WA Pinnacle Awards.

## How long have you been a member of Engineers Australia?

I joined as an undergraduate student in 1978 – so a long, long time!

## Why did you pursue a career in engineering?

There were many reasons – partly to annoy my parents, partly because everyone told me to study medicine and that didn't appeal, and partly because I enjoyed maths and sciences and thought it looked interesting.

**How can Australian communities/people/society benefit from your work now and in the future?**

I have spent the last decade leading WA on a journey of climate resilience so that a lack of water will not inhibit the state's liveability or economy. We have moved urban water supply to be increasingly independent of rainfall and worked with our community to lower per capita water use.

**What is the most challenging or interesting project you've ever worked on?**

The Water Corporation's Groundwater Replenishment project is Australia's first utility scale indirect potable wastewater recycling plant, which means we have now closed the water cycle – we can recycle used water directly back into use. I am enormously proud of this project – not for its technical excellence (which is indeed great) but for the community engagement leading to its strong support as a water source for Perth's drinking water.

**What do you see as one of the biggest issues facing the engineering profession?**

Climate change is real and we must adapt our approach to virtually every aspect of the engineering world. The future requires not only smart technical engineers but also those who can communicate, engage, and listen to stakeholders, customers, community, and influence others to ensure we develop the right solutions.



*Image: Sue with Kep, Australia's first leak detection dog.*

**What excites you about the future of the profession or what opportunities do you see for the future?**

I see young people who are digital natives and who ask the hard questions as the most valuable resource to our profession. I am thrilled and humbled by the work ethic and passion they show.

**Who is your engineering hero?**

I recently presented the annual CY O’Connor Lecture for the WA National Trust on the anniversary of that great engineer’s death. He was a man ahead of his time but a perfect example that fake news is not a recent phenomenon. His legacy is massive in our state, and as I researched him for my talk, my admiration for his skills grew. His tragic suicide should be a wake up call to every engineer that technical skills alone will not sway public opinion – we must communicate, listen, and engage as well.

Image Source: Courtesy of Sue Murphy

